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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [KDEM](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: SOUTH SUDAN OPPOSITION POLITICIAN ON THE CENSUS AND GOSS
POLITICS

Refs: A. Khartoum 604
[1](#)B. Khartoum 575
[1](#)C. Khartoum 566

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: South Sudan parliamentarian and opposition leader Dr. Jimmy Wongo believes that the GoSS's last-minute attempt to delay the census in the South has only made it look foolish and indecisive. Wongo said that he expects the NCP to manipulate census results to undercount the South's population, but that the GoSS could have minimized this threat had it focused on the census earlier. He said GoSS President Kiir deserves praise for having achieved stability in the South following the death of John Garang, but that since then he assessed Kiir as often indecisive, isolated, and unable to hold cabinet ministers accountable for incompetence and corruption. End Summary.

Census Indecision

[1](#)2. (SBU) On April 18, Juba Conoffs called on Dr. Jimmy Wongo, a Member of the South Sudan Legislative Assembly (SSLA) from the Union of Sudan African Parties (USAP) and Chairman of the SSLA's Public Accounts Committee. Dr. Wongo was very critical of the handling of the Sudan census by the leadership of the GoSS and the SPLM. Within the space of a few days, he noted, GoSS President Salva Kiir had spoken publicly in support of the census, then the GoSS Council of Ministers had voted to postpone it, followed by an agreement with Khartoum to delay census-taking by one week, to which the Council of Ministers agreed while at the same time issuing a statement that it reserves the right to disagree with the results (reftels). All this has made the GoSS appear indecisive and ineffectual, without improving the quality of census enumeration. Wongo said the GoSS has put the spotlight on its own actions, rather than on the conduct of the census and the NCP.

Worst of All Possible Worlds?

[1](#)3. (SBU) Wongo said he personally supports the inclusion of questions on ethnicity and religion in the census, but that the GoSS had only itself to blame for the absence of the questions on the questionnaire. GoSS Minister of Cabinet Affairs Luka Manoja signed off on final content of questionnaires and provided the Presidency in Khartoum with the authority to go forward with printing. Wongo charged that the GoSS Council of Ministers failed to take the census seriously until too late and now it is paying the price. It would have been better to have stuck with the original April 15 date, or else delayed it until the problems could be corrected. Now the GoSS has maneuvered itself into the worst possible situation.

[1](#)4. (SBU) GG Datta asked Wongo if he thinks that the GoSS is backing away from the census because it fears it would disprove the GoSS claim that the South makes up one third of Sudan's total population. Wongo responded that he is confident that the South's population actually constitutes more than one third (Note: we find it hard to

conceive that there are 15 million people in South Sudan. End Note).

Rather, he said the GoSS fears that the NCP will manipulate the census results to deliberately undercount the South's population. Wongo added that he has no doubt that this is just what the NCP plans to do. However, he said that the GoSS would have achieved a much better (if not perfect) result, if it had taken the census seriously early on, instead of waiting until the last minute.

Kiir a Conciliator, Not a Strong Leader

15. (SBU) Wongo said that President Kiir "stood tall" in the aftermath of the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the death of SPLM leader John Garang. Kiir inherited a tense situation in the South, with a variety of antagonistic, armed militias ready to resist the SPLM. Kiir put a priority on stability and, through a policy of moderation and conciliation, avoided bloodshed and brought these groups under GoSS authority.

16. (SBU) Wongo said that since then, however, Kiir has failed to master the art of governing. He has not taken a strong hand with his cabinet. Instead of identifying and removing corrupt or inefficient cabinet members, they have simply been rotated from seat to seat. Cabinet ministers have concluded they can defy Kiir without serious consequence. This explains the Council of Ministers' willingness to vote against Kiir on holding the census on schedule and they almost rejected it a second time.

Isolated Kiir

17. (SBU) Wongo disagreed with the suggestion that President Kiir's cautious approach reflected his style as a consensus builder and the need to hold a potentially fractious coalition together. Rather, Wongo asserted that Kiir is surrounded by a small group of trusted advisors who have isolated him. This group includes his office

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director Martin Majuk, GoSS Minister of Presidential Affairs Luka Biong Deng, GNU Foreign Minister Deng Alor, and GoSS Interior Minister Paul Mayong. Wongo said that he believes Luka and Deng Alor, both natives of Abyei, have kept Kiir almost solely focused on the Abyei question to the exclusion of other important issues. Wongo added that, while it would be appropriate for the SPLM as a political party to attempt to mediate the Darfur conflict, he disagreed with Kiir's having put the GoSS in that role. (Note: Our understanding is that Darfur Task Force Chair Abdel Aziz Helou is filling that role on behalf of the SPLM; Wongo may be intentionally misrepresenting the GOSS role in order to be critical - see comment. End note).

No Conflict Now, But Wait Until 2011

18. (SBU) Wongo doubts that the South will allow itself to be dragged back into conflict, whatever the provocations from the NCP. The real question is - what will happen in 2011? Southerners will vote for separation if given the choice, although Wongo said he is not certain that separation is the right decision. Even more problematic, Wongo does not believe that the NCP will allow the 2011 referendum to take place.

Comment

19. (SBU) A member of the opposition in the SSLA, Dr. Wongo is an outspoken critic of the leadership of the SPLM, which he considers often incompetent and corrupt. He very much enjoys playing the role of opposition critic, and the CG has on more than one occasion seen him bait SPLM leaders with intentionally provocative but humorous attacks. While his views on Kiir's isolation from his cabinet and his obsession with Abyei are interesting, we frankly take them with a grain of salt. He is certainly correct, however, in his analysis that Kiir and the Council of Ministers did themselves no favors in the botched manner in which they handled the problems with the census.

FERNANDEZ